



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

For release November 1, 1991 Patricia W. Fisher 202-208-5634

UNITED STATES HOSTS INTERNATIONAL WETLANDS MEETING

Director of the Interior Department's U.S Fish and Wildlife Service John Turner today announced the United States will host the annual standing committee meeting of The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance in St. Petersburg, Florida, November 5-9, 1991.

An alliance of 65 nations dedicated to conserving the world's most valuable wetlands, the committee will meet to develop its international program and activities to benefit these critical areas. In recognition of its leadership role in wetlands conservation, the United States was selected last year to head the standing committee with Turner serving as chairman. According to Turner, working on wetlands conservation in developing countries is one of the group's top priorities.

"I consider this one of the most important meetings ever held by the committee, " said Turner. "For the first time, we will be reviewing project proposals for wetlands assistance in these countries and using Convention funds to support those efforts. I'm looking forward to working with our international colleagues in this exciting and challenging partnership."

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The Convention will consider requests from developing countries to fund training for wetlands managers, environmental education programs related to wetlands, and other management and conservation activities. The United States is contributing \$250,000 to this effort. "These funds will have significant impact in countries where funding for wetlands is nonexistent," Turner said.

As part of the visit to Florida, committee members will get a first-hand look at this country's wetlands management practices at the local, state, and Federal levels. One stop will be Everglades National Park, which the Convention has designated a Wetland of International Importance.

The Convention designates wetlands of international importance throughout the world in order to enhance public awareness of wetland values. There are currently 10 such sites in the United States--Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and State Game Range (Alaska); Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge (Nevada); Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (New Jersey); the Chesapeake Bay Estuarine Complex (Virginia and Maryland); Cache-Lower White Rivers Joint Venture Area (Arkansas); Cheyenne Bottoms Game Area (Kansas), Horicon Marsh (Wisconsin); Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (Georgia and Florida); Everglades National Park (Florida); and the most recent addition, Catahoula Lake (Louisiana), which was dedicated October 27, 1991.